

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE
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BODHIDHARMA CROSSING THE YANGTZE ON A REED, hanging scroll, ink on paper,
35-1/8" x 12-1/4"
14th Century
The Cleveland Museum of Art

The hanging scroll reproduced (in detail) on the cover is from one of China's briefest, yet most productive cultural periods ... the Yüan dynasty, 1279-1368 A.D. Ruled by the Mongols under the Kublai Khan, and coming as they did between two famous dynasties - the Sung and Ming, these ninety years formed a watershed in Chinese cultural history. Also called a "time of troubles" these ninety years are the focus of a major exhibition, CHINESE ART UNDER THE MONGOLS, currently at The Cleveland Museum of Art. Never before has an exhibition so specifically scrutinized the Yüan period.

The cover work, entitled BODHIDHARMA CROSSING THE YANGTZE ON A REED, is one of eighty-five paintings in the exhibition and after November 24, when the exhibit closes, it will travel to Asia House in New York city where, with other American-owned objects in the show (about one-third of the collection presently on view), it will be displayed from January 9 through March 2. The Cleveland showing contains 315 works of art lent from public and private sources in Europe and Asia as well as the United States. Included are masterpieces of painting, calligraphy, ceramics, lacquer, jade, ivory, textiles, wood-block prints, silver and metal work, and sculpture,

The BODHIDHARMA painting, a Ch'an Buddhist (contemplative sect) work, was done anonymously in the second half of the Yüan dynasty. The brush strokes were executed in bluish black ink on soft buff paper.

(continued)

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In total, the hanging scroll is three and a half feet high and one foot wide. At the top a calligraphic inscription by the priest Liao-an Ch'ing Yü reads:

"Wind rises from the reed flowers,
the waves are high,
It's a long way to go beyond the cliff of the
Shao-shih mountain,
Above the worlds of Kalpas a flower is opening into
five petals,
So that your bare heels are just fine for
the whipping rattans."

Translation by Wai-kam Ho

After its Yüan exhibition travels, the painting may be seen in the permanent collections of The Cleveland Museum of Art.

The exhibition was organized by the Museum's director Sherman E. Lee and Wai-kam Ho, the curator of Chinese art, both of whom had long dreamed of preparing a show which would give increased attention to this short, neglected ^Eapoch which scholars in the United States had begun to discover only after World War II. They re-evaluated the literary man's painting (wen-jen-hua) whose ^Strict standards had been established during the Yüan dynasty and they subsequently realized that not only painting but Yüan porcelain and lacquer as well had undergone revolutionary changes which were to influence the norms for Chinese art five hundred years into the future. The artists composing the innovative cultural coterie were for the most part those who isolated themselves from the Mongols and preserved in their works aspects that were significantly Chinese. These Yüan artists prevailed against the alienation and revolt of the times and, at the same time, overthrew a previous Chinese tradition with a boldness that had not been witnessed for almost half a millennium.

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